



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IDENTIFIES PROBABLE CASES OF H1N1 INFLUENZA A (SWINE-ORIGIN FLU)

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) is awaiting laboratory confirmation from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on three probable cases of novel H1N1 Influenza A (swine-origin flu). The DOH State Laboratories Division (SLD) began conducting validation tests to subtype influenza samples and identify novel H1N1 cases this past Saturday after receiving testing materials from CDC that morning. The first preliminary tests completed at SLD on Sunday were presumptively positive, and samples were sent to CDC for confirmatory testing.

"With 36 states now confirming cases of novel H1N1 Influenza A or swine-origin flu, it is only a matter of time before Hawai'i also identifies its first case," said Health Director Dr. Chiyome Fukino. "Our department continues to monitor for and investigate possible cases for confirmation. Fortunately, the three probable cases awaiting confirmation had mild illness, and all have recovered at home."

The three probable cases are all Oahu residents. Two of the cases are adults, one with recent travel to Texas and the other becoming ill after exposure to their spouse. The third separate probable case is a school-aged child with recent travel to California. All three cases are considered probable as opposed to confirmed pending confirmation by CDC in Atlanta. CDC received the specimens and has prioritized them for testing. Results are expected within the next two days.

(more)

Dr. Sarah Park, State Epidemiologist and Chief of the Disease Outbreak Control Division said, "The one school-aged case did not attend school while ill. Therefore, at this time, school closure is not necessary. However, we have notified the Department of Education Superintendent Pat Hamamoto so that DOE may be fully apprised.

Dr. Park added, "In addition, we have followed up with the healthcare workers who had contact with the ill child and recommended antiviral prophylaxis as a precaution. Of these healthcare workers, one had direct unprotected exposure and was sneezed on by the child. This healthcare worker developed a sore throat 36 hours following the exposure, but tested negative for both the novel H1N1 flu virus as well as seasonal flu. As part of our response protocol, we have been following up with daily phone calls to all those who have been identified as needing home quarantine or as being at risk."

"CDC must validate our State Laboratories Division to test for the H1N1 Influenza A virus using the test kits we recently received. After validation, we will be able to provide timely confirmation to help guide precautionary measures," said Dr. Fukino, "The DOH continues to proceed with an abundance of caution and early confirmation is extremely valuable in fine-tuning our recommendations and response measures."

Novel H1N1 flu cases have been confirmed in at least 36 states so far, and more cases are expected. As of today, CDC is reporting 286 laboratory confirmed cases nationwide.

Anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms should call a doctor and isolate themselves from other people. Proper hand-washing can help prevent contracting the virus, and people should cough or sneeze into their sleeves.

For questions about novel H1N1 flu, possible symptoms, travel information or other issues related to this illness residents may call 1-866-767-5044 ext. 3 between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, and on weekends from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For more information on swine flu, visit www.hawaii.gov/health or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/swineflu.

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